BOOK·OF·THE·MONTH CLUB, *Inc.*
218 West 40th St., · · New York, N.Y.

Dear Reader:

Your name has been given us as that of a person who is interested in books, and who would appreciate the importance of a unique new movement in the book world.

We are accordingly taking the liberty of sending you the enclosed prospectus of the Book-of-the-Month Club, and we respectfully invite you to become a "Charter" Subscriber.

The privileges of a "Charter" Subscriber, as you will see, are exceptional. They entitle you to receive A PERPETUAL FREE BOOK-SELECTING SERVICE, as well as other privileges. Moreover, you will always receive books that are genuinely worth while. This is insured by the personnel of the Selecting Committee which includes some of the best-known critics in the country:

Henry Seidel Canby, Chairman
Heywood Broun
Dorothy Canfield
Christopher Morley
William Allen White

The reasons for making these inducements to you are explained in the Prospectus. You will quickly appreciate why this is an offer that can be made only to a limited circle of people, and that it must be withdrawn as soon as it accomplishes the purpose for which it is made.

We hope, accordingly, that you will be persuaded to enroll as a "Charter" Subscriber without delay. Certainly you have much to gain by doing so, and nothing to lose. For you may cancel your subscription at any time.

In other words, to convince you of the many conveniences of this unique plan, we offer you the opportunity of TRYING this service for as long or short a period as you care to. And this trial will cost you nothing, beyond the price of one or two important books, which you will probably wish to purchase anyway.

Awaiting your reply with great interest,

Cordially yours,

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, INC.
Robert K. Haas
Director of Service

The

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

An outline of a unique
plan for those who wish
to keep abreast of the
best books of the day

The

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

SELECTING COMMITTEE

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, Chairman
HEYWOOD BROUN
DOROTHY CANFIELD
CHRISTOPHER MORLEY
WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

Copyright, 1926 by

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, Inc.
218 West 40th St. New York, N. Y.

INTRODUCTORY

IS there anything more satisfying than to keep abreast of the best new books of our time as they appear? There is an overpowering fascination about good new books that older works, ripe with wisdom as they may be, can never have. The glamour of the present is upon them. Of us, and of today, they tell us. In reading them, in enjoying them, in talking with others about them, we feel the new thought of our day actually taking shape and we participate in its formation.

Aside from this, much of the pleasure we derive from new books arises from the consciousness of reading them when a great many other people, akin to us in spirit, are likewise reading and discussing them. How "lost" we feel, what a deprivation it is, when for some reason we *miss* reading an important new book!

Why is it that so many wideawake people, who know the joy of this fine *camaraderie* that exists among readers of new books, still neglect time and again to "keep up" with the best that is published?

It is not that there are too many such books to read. The presses turn out new books by the hundreds, but the mills of the public taste grind fine, and it is only a handful of volumes that one need read in the course of a year, to be satisfactorily conversant with the best books of the day.

The true reason for this condition lies in the reading habits of the average book-lover, combined with the inefficient system of book distribution that prevails in this country.

An analysis of the average intelligent book-reader would show this: Occasionally, at haphazard and almost altogether by chance, he reads an advertisement or a review of a book that engages his interest. Or he hears someone, whose taste he respects, speak well of a book or of an author. He says to himself, "I must read that."

He is, however, ordinarily a busy person. The demands upon his attention are never-ceasing. At some time, by chance, he may

pass a bookstore, and if his memory is good he may buy the book. Unfortunately his memory is not always good. He stops and thinks: "What *was* that book I wanted to read?" He cannot remember; he hasn't the time to search among the hundreds of books on the counters. He has not the opportunity to browse in a bookstore. The final result is that he seldom reads the book, immensely as he desired to, unless someone gives or lends it to him.

It is for such a person, chiefly, that The Book-of-the-Month Plan is designed. For him, and for the innumerable thousands of cultured men and women who live in out-of-the-way places, remote from bookstores and publishers.

In the following pages an outline of this unique service is given. It is so simple it is strange that no one has ever thought of it before. All who hear of it agree that it will prove of incalculable benefit to book readers. It is the belief of the originators, however, that it will be of no less benefit to the entire book world, to authors, publishers and booksellers alike, by greatly widening the circle of book readers in this country; and that every subscriber to it may have the satisfaction of feeling that he is playing a definite role in stimulating our literature and deepening our culture.

HENRY SEIDEL CANBY, *Chairman*

Henry Seidel Canby, born in Delaware and educated at Yale, was for nearly twenty years in charge of the freshman instruction in English at Yale. In 1911 he was one of the founders of *The Yale Review* and in 1918 spent a year in England and France in liaison work in connection with the War. He was the founder and first editor of *The Literary Review of the New York Evening Post* and is at present editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature.* He has published various books on the short story and upon the writing of English and a series of volumes of essays, some on education, others on literary criticism. His last two volumes, "Definitions: 1st and 2nd series," have to do with contemporary American literature and criticism in general.

HOW THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH PLAN WORKS—AN OUTLINE

THE service rendered by the Book-of-the-Month Club is designed for two classes of people; first, for those individuals who are anxious to keep *au courant* with the best of the new books as they are published, but who constantly neglect to do so through procrastination or because they are too busy; second, for persons who live in remote districts, where it is impossible to obtain books except with difficulty.

The Book-of-the-Month Service allows such individuals *to subscribe for the best books as they appear*, just as they would subscribe to a monthly magazine.

Each month the best book published (to be selected in a manner to be explained) is sent to the subscriber.

Under this method, not only is it impossible for him to miss the best books, but he actually becomes one of the first readers of them. He can be as forgetful as he likes. Automatically, once a month, he receives a book that he would not want to miss reading; a book he himself would want to buy, if he did not get it in this way; a book significant enough to be the subject of discussion among intelligent people everywhere.

HOW THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH IS CHOSEN

How are the best books of the month chosen? How may the subscriber be sure he will receive books that he himself would select?

The books are chosen by a Selecting Committee consisting of well-known critics and writers, whose catholicity of taste and whose judgment as to books have been demonstrated for many years before the public. The following are acting upon this Selecting Committee:

Henry Seidel Canby, Chairman
Heywood Broun
Dorothy Canfield
Christopher Morley
William Allen White

HEYWOOD BROUN

Heywood Broun, born in Brooklyn and a graduate of Harvard in 1910, first made his reputation as a correspondent and reporter. His reporting revealed a rare critical and descriptive faculty which was fully developed when he became a columnist for *The New York Tribune* and afterward *The New York World*. Since then his comment upon things in general as well as upon the special fields of literature and the theatre in which he has become an authority, has been followed by the intelligent with constant delight. He is also a novelist and a lecturer.

These individuals have no connection with the Book-of-the Month Club, outside of the selection of books, *in which they thus have a completely free hand.* They have agreed to serve in this capacity, because they recognize the importance of this enterprise and feel that it allows them an opportunity to guide and influence the character of reading in this country—something which, throughout their careers, they have all been interested in doing.

To this Selecting Committee, there is submitted every worthwhile book, of general interest to the reading public, immediately upon publication, or shortly thereafter.

Each month, by a system of voting, the Selecting Committee chooses a book which in its judgment is one that every person of intelligence and taste will desire to read. It is the "best book of the month," in the opinion of this committee, and it is certain that any book selected by such a group will at least prove significant enough to be the subject of widespread discussion and enjoyment.

This one book, chosen as the best, is forthwith sent to every subscriber to this service.

SUBSCRIBERS HAVE PRIVILEGE OF EXCHANGE

It may happen, however, that a subscriber may prefer to have received some other book. Or it may be that he has already bought that particular book or received it as a gift.

To insure the complete satisfaction of every subscriber, the Selecting Committee is instructed *to list four, five or six additional books every month,* which in its opinion the average intelligent reader will most enjoy.

This Supplementary List is mailed with the chosen "best book," and if any subscriber wishes to exchange the book he receives for one of the other books listed, he has the privilege of doing so, if he sends back the book received within five days after receiving it.

(The books are sent to subscribers in special mailing cartons, so that in case a subscriber wishes to make an exchange, all he has to do is to replace the book in its carton, and re-address it to the Book-of-the-Month Club, specifying the book he wishes in exchange.)

DOROTHY CANFIELD

Dorothy Canfield is a daughter of a distinguished librarian of Columbia University. She was educated partly in France and partly in the United States. Although her "Hillsboro People" and "The Bent Twig" in 1915 were widely read, it was perhaps her "Home Fires in France," in 1918, which brought home to so many Americans the reality of war-time France, that established her reputation as one of the important writers of this period. Since then she has published a series of important novels and was the translator of Papini's "Life of Christ." She has done important educational work in her home state of Vermont while carrying on her literary career.

THE COMMITTEE COMMENTS ON EACH BOOK

Every month, with the "best book" that is chosen, a short notice is sent, giving comments of the Selecting Committee upon the book, and including their reasons for choosing it. These comments will unquestionably be found of great interest by subscribers. Information about the author of the book is often added, particularly where he may not happen to be widely known. Comment is also made on each of the books contained in the monthly Supplementary List.

WHAT TYPE OF BOOKS ARE SELECTED

There is only one criterion which the Selecting Committee observes in its selection of a book: it must be of general interest, and it must appeal to the intelligent reading public as a whole, not to special classes.

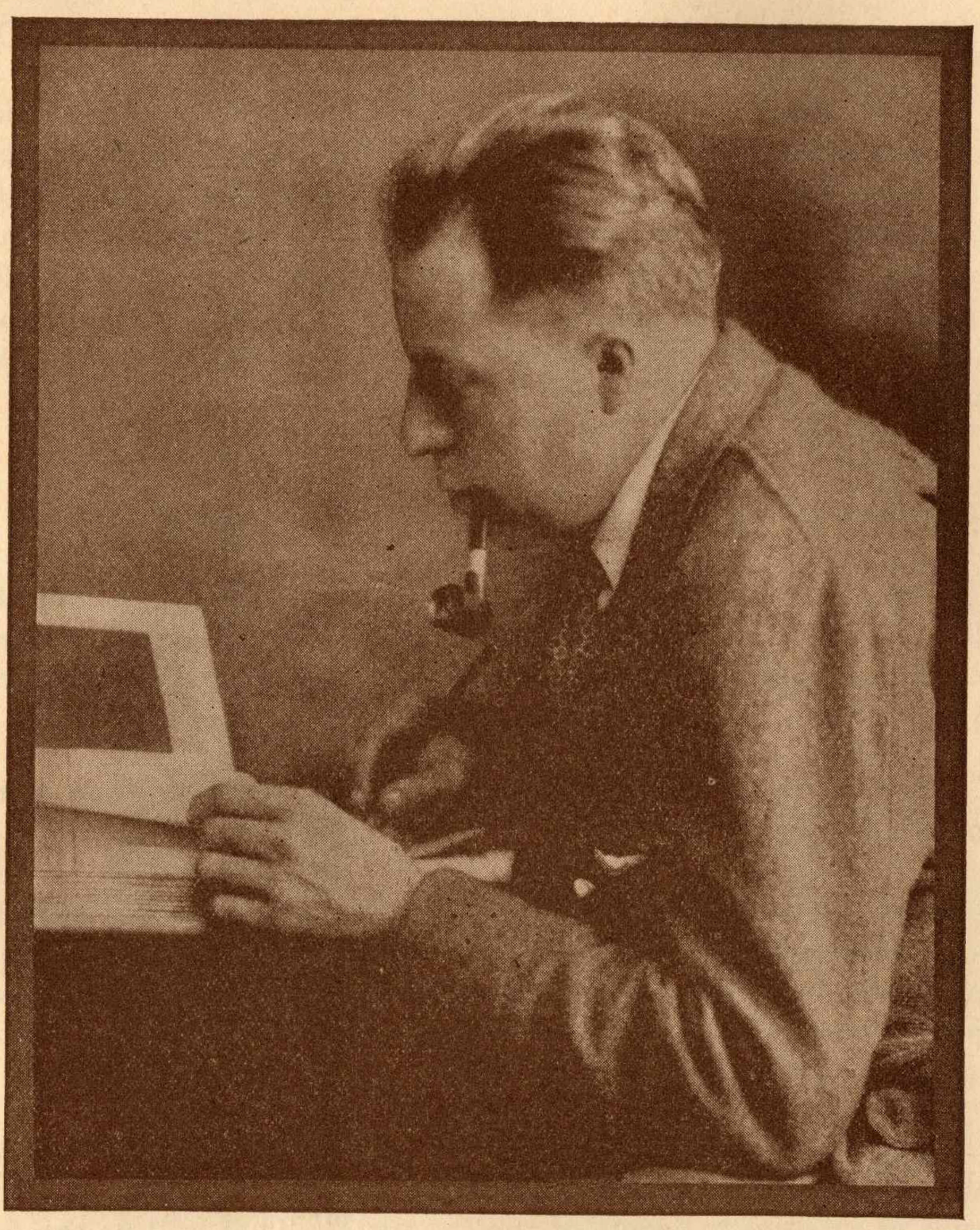
For this reason, it is probable that during the year most of the books selected will be of the best type of fiction.

This does not mean that non-fiction books will be excluded from consideration. A biography of wide appeal may easily stand out as the best book of the month; or some epoch-making book upon science, religion or philosophy, written for popular understanding and not for scholars.

"Has this book real merit, will it be considered important and interesting, and worth-while reading, by the hundreds of thousands of intelligent people of the country?" That will be the first question considered in selecting any book.

Judged by such a criterion, every now and then some non-fiction book will appear of such outstanding character that it must be included. Such books, however, are comparatively rare. It is safe to prophesy that most of the books selected during the year will be outstanding works of fiction.

There will, however, *always be included in the Supplementary List at least one work of non-fiction,* so that those who prefer non-fiction books will be able to make an exchange, if they so desire.



CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

Christopher Morley, born in Haverford, Pa., and a graduate of both Haverford and Oxford, began his professional career as a teacher, then tried publishing, and finally emerged as a columnist and essayist of unusual charm and distinction. His essays have been published in a brilliant series of books of which "Parnassus on Wheels" is still perhaps the most widely read. But with "Where the Blue Begins" in 1922 and "Thunder on the Left" in 1925, it became clear that his highest distinction was to come as a novelist in those realms where fantasy and acute critical sense and a sense of humor carry the greatest price. Perhaps he has done more than any other single man to revive the memory of good old books and welcome new ones.

WHAT DO THE BOOKS COST?

The books will be delivered and billed to subscribers *at exactly the same price that is charged by the publisher*—that is, at the regular retail price, whatever that may be in each case. The bills are payable on receipt.

It is, however, recognized as desirable that subscribers know, with some definiteness, the limits within which the price of the books selected will be kept. No one will object to paying as small a sum as $2.00 for the best book of the month; or occasionally $2.50; or $3.00. But excellent books are often published at $5.00 (sometimes $10.00) and no subscriber will want books at such prices billed to him without previous notice.

For that reason, the Selecting Committee limits its choice of books to be sent out in any month, *to those that are priced between $1.00 and $3.00.*

If a book sells for more than $3.00 (and is still of such an excellent character that the Selecting Committee feels that it must be recommended) it is placed upon the Supplementary List.

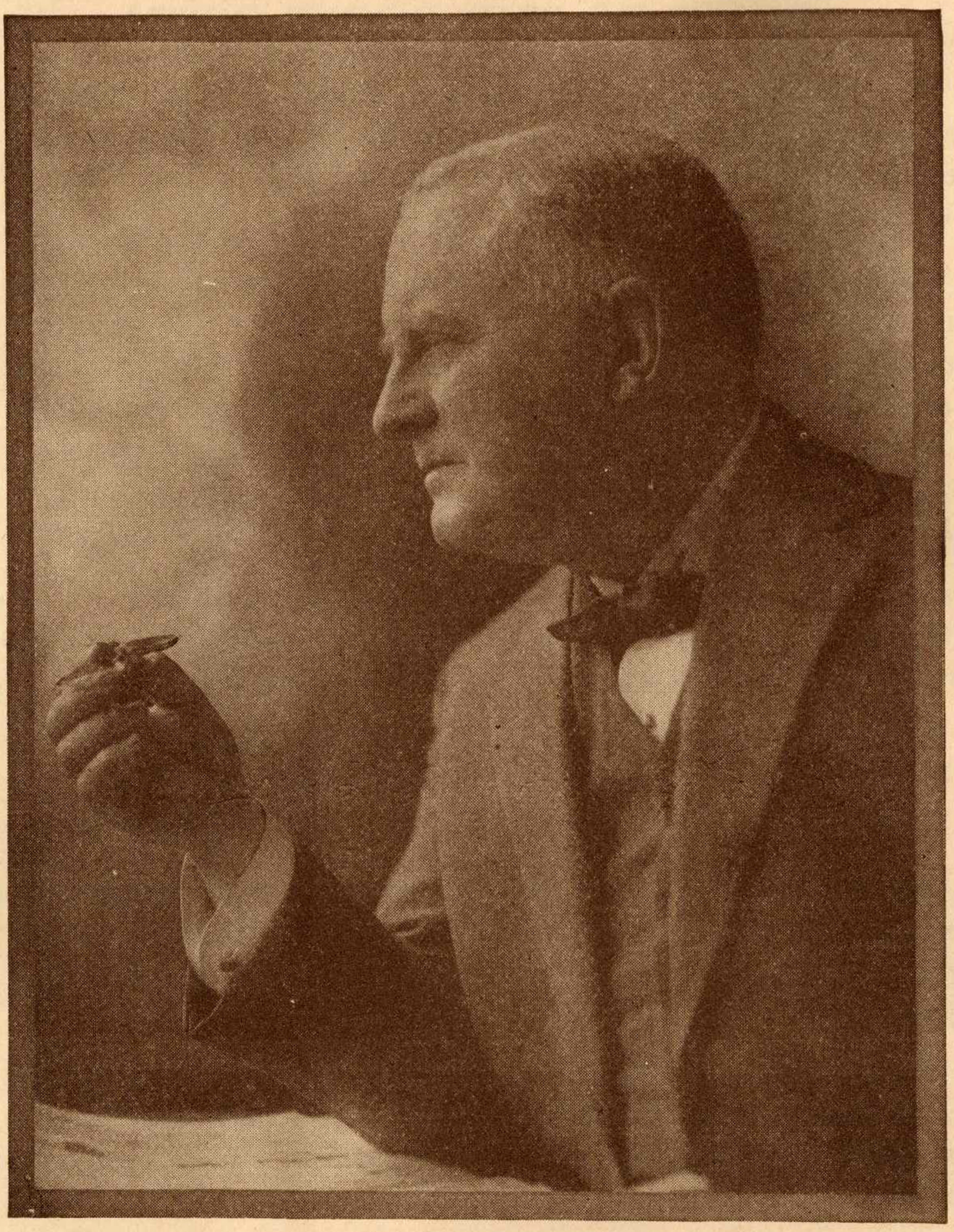
Those subscribers, then, who desire to obtain it (in spite of the higher price at which it sells) can do so at their option, returning the book they have received and being billed for the higher-priced one, when it is sent.

Under this plan, subscribers have the assurance that the books sent to them on the monthly plan *will in no case ever cost more than $3.00.* The average price of the books sent each month will probably be between $2.00 and $2.50.

SUBSCRIBERS MAY CANCEL AFTER TRIAL

A still further protection to the subscriber, to make sure that he receives books that he himself prefers and that appeal to his individual taste—is the privilege of cancellation. The Book-of-the-Month Club does not wish to "tie" anyone who subscribes to its service to an obligation of receiving books he may not want.

Considering the personnel of the Selecting Committee, it feels that there is no question that the books chosen will be ones that every intelligent booklover will delight in reading.



WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE

William Allen White, born in Emporia, Kansas, and chiefly responsible for the familiar sound of the name of that town, is one of the most distinguished editors in America. He has stood especially for the independence and worth of the small town newspaper and for many years has been a powerful voice speaking for the West. In addition to service on many delegations and foundations, he is a writer of distinction in pure literature as well as journalism. "A Certain Rich Man" and "In the Heart of a Fool" are widely read. His admirable sanity, combined with a courageous and progressive attitude in all affairs involving the American mind, has won general recognition.

Nevertheless, tastes differ, and if any subscriber—after a trial—feels that the service is not as valuable as he anticipated, *he may cancel his subscription.* (See subscription form.)

In other words, each subscriber gives the service a trial. He sees what books he receives. He reads the comments of the Selecting Committee. He observes the books contained in the Supplementary List for Exchange. He has a thorough opportunity to judge whether the books selected by the Committee will be ones that he himself would buy anyway. He can form an opinion as to the value and convenience of the system. He can then decide whether he wants to continue the service or to cancel. No more thoroughgoing protection can be given him.

EXCEPTIONAL INDUCEMENT MADE NOW TO CHARTER SUBSCRIBERS

THE Book-of-the-Month Club is not designed to serve those who seek "bargains." Its purpose is entirely different. *Its service is primarily one of unique convenience.* It was organized to help those who want to be assured of reading the best books as they appear; who want to guard against their own haphazard methods of book-buying; who want to make sure that they will *never miss* the best books.

The originators of the Book-of-the-Month Club believe that there are tens of thousands of intelligent people who will recognize the value of this service and will wish to take advantage of it without any "extra" inducements.

The organization, however, is at present in its formative stage. It will grow, as the popularity of a book grows, by *being talked about;* by having subscribers tell their friends about its conveniences. For that reason—at this period of its existence—it is making the following inducement in order to obtain a substantial nucleus of Charter Subscribers:

To all who subscribe at this time the Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc., *will agree to supply the Selecting Service without a cent of charge, for as long a period as they remain subscribers.*

In other words, Charter Subscribers (and those who subscribe at once are in this category) will never be required to pay any fee for the special service they receive; *they will pay only for the*

books they get and the price of the books to them will never be higher than the publishers' price. Moreover, they will receive this Selecting Service *without charge*, month in and month out, year in and year out, so long as they choose to remain subscribers.

It is difficult at this time to measure the money value of this concession to Charter Subscribers. It must be plain, however, that the service which the Book-of-the-Month Club will give its subscribers will be a costly one to maintain. The members of the Selecting Committee are all extremely busy individuals and have to be reimbursed for the time they devote to choosing the books; in addition, a very elaborate "machinery" for promptly and thoroughly taking care of the individual desires of each subscriber has had to be installed. These heavy costs will ultimately have to be met by a special yearly or monthly fee—over and above the cost of the books. ***But to Charter Subscribers no such fee will ever be charged, no matter how long they remain subscribers.***

It is necessary to add, here, that this offer may be withdrawn at any time, *and will positively be withdrawn* as soon as it is felt that the Book-of-the-Month Club is firmly enough established throughout the country, to gather new subscribers of its own momentum.

The directors of the enterprise have decided to make this inducement because they know, from a long experience with book-readers, that the greatest problem in inducing people to obtain books—which they actually want to read badly—is to overcome the habit of procrastination. Again and again a person will say to himself, "I certainly want to get that book!"—and then fail, through procrastination, to get it.

This habit will operate, the directors realize, against the Book-of-the-Month Club, just as it does against individual books. And this inducement *of perpetual free Selecting Service* is made in order to overcome that tendency in enough people to give this movement an initial momentum.

WILL YOU SUBSCRIBE TO THIS SERVICE NOW?

THINK back over the last few years. How many excellent books have appeared! You heard of them. They were the subject of conversation among people of taste everywhere. You often intended to read them. But how numerous are the ones that you fail to "get around to!" Now, in all probability, you will *never* read them.

Think, too, of the intense enjoyment you derive from the good new books that you occasionally do manage to buy. Aside from the satisfaction of reading them as soon as, and often before, other people are doing so—aside from the incidental pleasure of being able to "talk new books" with intelligent people—there is a special fascination in the literature that is being produced today. Our writers are *alive* as never before. It is an age of flux we live in; the world of men has never seen an age like it; and the infinite variety of its color is seen nowhere as in our books.

If you rely upon your "good intentions," as you have in the past, you will miss the better part of this absorbing and continuing show of life, just as you have in the past.

The Book-of-the-Month Club has been organized for just such as you. Its conveniences were meant for you. Will you not join it now, and make sure at last, in this way, that the habit of procrastination in book-buying, that the driving circumstances of a busy life, will not continue to cheat you of this rarest of all pleasures?

Certainly the expense is too insignificant to deter you. You can easily afford $2.00 or $2.50 each month, for the pleasure and satisfaction of obtaining the best book of that month. Each one, you can be assured from the outline of this plan, will be a book you would want to obtain anyway, but which in most cases you will probably not obtain, simply because you will overlook it.

Why not have it come *automatically* to you, without trouble? Once a month a good new book will be laid before you; a book chosen by individuals upon whose judgment you can completely rely; busy as you may be, you have a month in which to read it,

and then another equally excellent book is presented to you. So, without trouble, you keep abreast of the very finest writing that is being done today. Is this not a service that is far too valuable to you to disregard?

If you have the slightest question of its value, you still take no risk of obligation, *because of your privilege of cancellation.* Surely there are enough advantages inherent in the plan to justify you at least *in giving it a trial.*

Sooner or later, it is fairly certain, you will subscribe to the Book-of-the-Month Club Plan. Why not send in your subscription at once, and obtain—as a Charter Subscriber—the advantage of *the perpetual free Selecting Service* offered in the preceding pages?

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, INC.
218 WEST 40TH ST. NEW YORK, N. Y.

Some Inside Facts About Books, Publishers and Authors

THE circle of book readers in the United States is limited almost beyond belief. It is an insignificant minority in the population. A short time ago a professor at Columbia University estimated that the publishers of current books were being supported by a beggarly two hundred thousand people out of our population of one hundred and ten millions.

This number of people, by purchasing from six to a dozen current books a year, were keeping all the book-publishers, book-sellers, and authors alive. This does not, of course, include those who buy books of special appeal, or who are occasional buyers of widely discussed "best-sellers." It is, however, a fair estimate of the number of people who are *consistent* book-buyers.

What industry—and is there a more vital industry to any country than its literature?—can develop into its greatest possibilities upon such meager support?

In what way can the Book-of-the-Month Club with its supporters, alter this situation? To understand how, it is necessary to know a little of the "inside facts" about how certain books attain a wide sale—when they do, which is only too seldom.

When a book is first published—unless the author has already made a name for himself—the edition printed is small, usually from two to five thousand copies. The publisher cannot afford to print more than this, for nothing is more uncertain in this world than the fate of a new book.

Printing so few copies, the publisher likewise cannot afford to advertise it heavily. He is obliged by circumstances to issue many books, distributing his risk. His appropriation for advertising is scattered among these many books; and his advertising of each one amounts to very little more than a bare notice of its appearance.

Except in the most exceptional cases, it is not advertising that makes a book "take hold." Copies of the book are sent around for review. Occasionally (and not by any means so frequently as is supposed) the book inspires a certain *type of criticism* that causes "talk." This starts an increased sale, but only starts it. The fate of the book is still uncertain.

If it is the type of book, however, that so pleases the original buyers that they begin talking about it for one reason or another, discussing it, and recommending it to others—then the book "takes hold" and only then can a fairly wide distribution of it be expected. In short, it is "word-of-mouth" advertising upon which publishers and authors must chiefly rely.

In other words, it is largely *chance* that governs the fate of a book and of an author—the chance of *obtain-*

ing a certain type of review or discussion, that will induce enough original sales to "start the ball a-rolling."

The result of this state of affairs approaches the tragic in many cases. There have been innumerable books, of the highest worth, that are never even heard of by hundreds of thousands of people, who would be delighted with them, if they knew of them. There have been authors who have toiled for years, in privation, before they attained the recognition due them. Most of them admit themselves that they succumb; they become tainted with commercialism; the cheap magazines lure them, simply because they must live in some moderate degree of comfort. *Their best work too often goes unwritten.*

Since it is "word-of-mouth advertising" that starts a good book upon its career, the Book-of-the-Month Club can exert the most potent influence in the distribution of books of real merit. The proper kind of favorable criticism, when it comes, *at the most* starts a few thousand readers talking. Conceive what the effect will be when forty or fifty thousand of the most intelligent people of the country *receive the same book at the same time;* conceive of each one of these people as a center of discussion of that book, telling their friends about it, and recommending it to other people of taste. If the book is of any merit at all—and considering the personnel of the Selecting Committee choosing it, it is bound to have *some* merit—the element of chance in its success is wholly eliminated.

The result of such a development must inevitably

be a great widening of the circle of book readers in this country, something that publishers, book-sellers and authors—indeed everyone concerned with the culture of our people—have been praying for through generations.

Thus everyone who subscribes to the Book-of-the-Month Club (while he does so selfishly, because of the great convenience and the continued enjoyment he himself will derive from it) may still feel that indirectly he is instrumental in furthering a movement that is of incalculable importance to our civilization.

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, INC.
218 WEST 40TH ST. NEW YORK, N. Y.

BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB, Inc.

218 WEST 40th STREET

NEW YORK, N. Y.